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ABSTRACT

The Massachusetts State Council on Vocational Education advocates both articulation between secondary schools and community colleges and system coordination between education and employment training. Council projects have had two basic operational goals: to create dialogue within and between sectors and to create products that would stimulate policy development and provide technical assistance. The five products developed by these projects build on and reinforce each other. They include: (1) an inventory of intersystem vocational education agreements that provides current information on the status of articulation, collaboration, and Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) agreements between high schools, community colleges, and service delivery areas; (2) a paper on articulation which correlates significant educational and economic trends with an argument for using articulation as a strategy to meet occupational predictions; and (3) an articulation guidebook which explains forms of articulation, reviews benefits and barriers, introduces the importance of formal agreements and plans, and discusses planning processes, implementation activities, financial considerations, and program development. A fourth product is a report on a study of the status of coordination between JTPA and school/college occupational programs that used case studies developed through roundtable discussions and individual interviews in four JTPA service delivery areas. And finally, a handbook was produced that describes four different types of coordination practices already in place in Massachusetts. (YLB)

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COORDINATING EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT TRAINING:

A COORDINATED EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Massachusetts State Council on Vocational Education

1989

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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For the last four years, the Massachusetts State Council on Vocational Education has been advocating both articulation between secondary schools and community colleges and system coordination between education and employment training. The Council has placed a high priority on these initiatives due to its concern for quality services and efficient use of resources. Being aware of disruptive cycles in public financing, as well as the difficulty of pursuing long-term planning in the public sector, it has also sought to institutionalize articulation and coordination as a strategy for creating program stability.

The Council acknowledges that institutional behavior regarding the implementation of articulation and coordination in Massachusetts remains considerably tentative. It is understood that short-term self-interest is a powerful barrier to risking significant organizational change. It is also well documented that organizations (systems) will resist new programs requiring unfamiliar behavior when turf is threatened and longstanding missions are perceived to be under challenge.

However, preoccupation with the short-term and unreexamined missions collide with the reality of a rapidly changing world. While we might prefer to do business as usual, the environment within which our business gets done, is forcing a reformulation of the demands and expectations placed on both education and employment training. The time is approaching when business as usual will run counter to both collective and individual self-interest. The stark reality is that global competition demands a rethinking of these systems. Without an adequate response to the growing technological sophistication of other economies and cultures as well as the intensity with which other nations successfully compete, we risk a substantial reduction in our relative standard of living. Furthermore, no response by government or industry can succeed without a dramatic improvement in human resource development.

The future belongs to those nations which will be the most creative in the Arts and Sciences and which develop the "smartest" and most flexible labor force. Although in the past this description would have been apt for one country only - the United States - it will not be so in the future without substantial improvement in the lifetime education and training of all our citizens. This will not be an easy challenge to meet. Longstanding obstacles presented by entrenched systems have been augmented by problematic new conditions which include an aging population, a youth cohort which is increasingly poor and disadvantaged, and a growing underclass. An adequately smart workplace will not only require new ways of doing business, but will also require tapping into these groups to fulfill future employer demands.

The Council, in recognizing these many complex issues, has placed a priority on articulation and coordination as tools with a significant potential to improve student and client outcomes. Articulation is vertical system integration; it is intended to

rationalize curricular connections between secondary and postsecondary education. Properly implemented, it holds the promise of providing a more solid education for students of all levels of ability. Whereas coordination is the process of horizontally integrating the activities of different systems with overlapping goals. Properly implemented, it holds the promise of improved service delivery and a more efficient use of resources.

In pursuit of these priorities, the Council requested and received two successive grants from the Board of Education. The projects funded by the grants had two basic operational goals. The first goal was to create dialogue within and between sectors. The second goal was to create products that would stimulate policy development and provide technical assistance.

Dialogue was fostered through ongoing leadership groups consisting of secondary and postsecondary educators, employment training professionals, legislators, and State level administrators. These groups surfaced issues, debated solutions, recommended initiatives and reviewed products in the process of development. Further dialogue was developed through issue oriented focus groups and invitational conferences.

Product development was the responsibility of Council staff and consultants with specific expertise in either articulation or coordination. The products, either recommended or shaped by the leadership committee and focus groups, included inventories of articulation and coordination, occasional papers and guides, descriptions of model practices, and studies of system coordination within the Commonwealth. They were designed to build on each other and to reinforce each other. As a result, there is a connecting thread that runs through the work and commends it to an integrated summary. Determining what programs of articulation and coordination exist in Massachusetts, examining the implementation of these programs, and analyzing opportunities and barriers to further cooperation is a continuum of work and represents the substance which the report summarizes.

Commonwealth Connections - An Inventory of Inter-system Vocational Education Agreements

This inventory, completed in the Spring of 1989, is the thread that begins to weave the issues of articulation and coordination together. This report is an expansion and update of the first inventory of its type completed two years earlier under the initial coordination project. In compiling the inventory, Community Colleges, Regional Vocational Schools, City and Independent Vocational Schools, County Agricultural Schools, Comprehensive High Schools offering five or more Chapter 74 vocational programs, and all Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) Service Delivery Areas (SDAs) were canvassed.

The inventory has four specific purposes:

1. To provide current information on the status of articulation, collaboration, and JTPA agreements between High Schools, Community Colleges, and Service Delivery Areas
2. To compare findings with the earlier inventory, noting significant changes and trends
3. To be a source of technical assistance through narratives describing the activities of each institution and the listing of contacts for further information.
4. To generate policy discussion regarding coordination between Schools, Colleges and Service Delivery Areas.

The overall response rate was excellent. The accumulated data was quite sufficient to fulfill the purposes described above.

Compared to the earlier inventory, the results indicated a definite increase in cooperative efforts among the various institutions. It also became clearer that collaboration is most prevalent between community colleges and regional vocational schools. The regional schools and community colleges also had the most job training agreements with SDAs. The comprehensive schools and city vocational schools are less inclined to be involved in activities that articulate their curriculum with higher education or coordinate their programs with employment training. The inventory does not analyze why certain institutions participate in such activities nor, for that matter, does it evaluate the depth, sophistication, or success of the coordinated programming that was reported. However, the inventory does serve the cause of raising these and other questions, thereby setting the foundation for policy discussion and analysis aimed at enhancing articulation and coordination efforts in the Commonwealth. (Indeed the other papers to be described in this summary do probe these issues.)

In terms of specifics, the inventory contains a wealth of information. The following is a very brief sampling of the data:

- 80% of the community colleges report articulation agreements, with a 49% increase in the last two years and an 18% increase in collaborative agreements spread across all types of secondary schools.
  Their contracts with JTPA increased by 35%, but only 10 community colleges have JTPA contracts.

- Regional vocational schools showed a 17% increase in articulated programs.

- While 70% of regional vocational schools report articulated programs, only 55% of city vocational schools and two of the ten comprehensive schools responding report program articulation.

- Regional and independent schools report little change in the number of other collaborative activities with community colleges. However, the number of these schools reporting JTPA contracts jumped from 10 to 17.

- Eleven SDAs reported having contracts with secondary schools and/or community colleges.

Significant questions raised by the data are numerous. A sampling is provided here to convey the breadth and depth of the accumulated material. Why do Regional Schools and Community Colleges collaborate more easily with each other than do other schools and systems, and why are comprehensive and city vocational schools relatively less collaborative with regard to employment related programs? What are the barriers to creating effective and lasting articulation and coordination? Do issues of geography, institutional independence, and a culture favoring local autonomy over regionalization, cause an underlying intransigence to cooperation? Are external fiscal incentives the only means of getting people to work together? In view of the critical challenge facing public education and other systems dealing with human resource development, should public funds continue to support institutions unwilling to reorganize their service delivery around a collaborative mentality that seeks to maximize client service and operational efficiency?

The Council, in its advocacy role, has become increasingly concerned about these types of issues. In analyzing two successive inventories over the past four years, both the data reported and not reported have raised more questions than they have answered. Though coordination activities are considerably more prevalent than may have been predicted, they are far from being a way of institutional life, nor a fully committed way of doing business. An effective response to these questions requires continued dialogue and analysis in order to elevate the issues to higher levels of deliberation.

To provoke this response, the project prepared additional products to serve with the inventory as the basis for an invitational conference of professionals from education and employment training. This work includes two documents dealing with secondary/postsecondary articulation and two dealing with coordination between education and employment training.

Beginning with the emphasis on articulation was intended to demonstrate not only its intrinsic value, but also the importance of cooperation within a system as a prerequisite for that system to work cooperatively with others. Individual systems must first respect and demonstrate a cooperative culture in fulfilling their own missions before they can effectively pursue inter-system collaboration.

Massachusetts Occupational and Educational Trends: The Need for Program Articulation

This paper on articulation is an attempt to correlate significant educational and economic trends with an argument for using articulation as a strategy to meet occupational predictions. The paper builds on a central theme of the M.I.T. Commission on Industrial Productivity that

calls for major changes in the way human resources are developed in the course of a lifetime in order "to produce significantly improved economic performance and a rising standard of living." While articulation is not presented as a panacea, it is argued that it has the potential to improve educational quality, enhance the efficient use of resources, respond effectively to diverse reform proposals, and most importantly to sustain student interest in school.

As for occupational trends, the complex nature of present and emerging technology is once again stressed. Technology will not make jobs simpler. Technology will change the nature of work and, in most instances, will require both better schooled and more highly trained workers. In the future, more jobs will require postsecondary education, and there will be less need for low skilled workers. Once on the job, workers will be required to work creatively, cooperatively and have an understanding of entire processes. They will need to be problem solvers.

A review of "Occupational Demands in Massachusetts" demonstrates that the demand for engineering technicians; computer technicians, analysts, programmers and operators; paralegals; and health-care assistants will have the greatest growth. Articulated programming can effectively provide the required advanced skills needed by new entrants to these occupations. Additionally, by eliminating course duplication, and providing credit for courses completed at the secondary level, students also gain the option of earning an Associate's Degree in less time and at less cost.

Furthermore, this paper argues the need for articulated programming for that "half" of secondary students who are not in college preparatory programs. General track students, vocational students, dropouts, and potential dropouts need to be motivated to stay in school for more extensive learning in order to be "smart" on the job. Sophisticated occupational programming, a high school diploma, the opportunity for a college degree, along with the promise of a quality job are strong inducements. It is further posited that improving program structure not only enhances educational and occupational skills, but also gives the learner the tools and interest to pursue lifelong learning.

Employers benefit from having a larger pool of desperately needed "smart workers." Students benefit from immediate access to the quality job market. Furthermore, the student is better prepared to transfer or update skills as the demands of the workplace change. And, it is of no little import that a better educated workforce is also a better educated citizenry.

Rx Articulation: A Guidebook to Successful Program Articulation

A logical follow-up to "Massachusetts' Occupational and Educational Trends: The Need for Program Articulation," was a detailed discussion of the elements of an articulated program and a review of generally accepted practices of implementation.

Therefore, the connecting thread of the coordination project was woven into a third product. The Articulation Guidebook takes some pain to explain to the uninitiated the various forms of articulation, briefly reviews benefits and barriers, and introduces the importance of formal agreements and plans. A careful explanation is made of the difference between articulated programs that shorten time needed for program completion and those that allow students to pursue advanced work without adding time in school. Also introduced is the concept of 2+2, which is, in fact, a four year comprehensive curriculum for grades 11 through 14.

Regarding benefits and barriers, the guidebook is quick to cover the issue of "turfism" as it relates to competition for clients. It reminds us that articulation is, in effect, coordination between institutions which are not competing for the same students. It is a strategy for cooperation that can provide increased benefits to students while insuring that the integrity of each program level is respected. This is an extremely important point in that it underscores cooperative behavior that is not threatening. When people and institutions learn to coordinate work that does not subtract from each other's turf, it is easier to move on to similar efforts in which win-win situations are less obvious and more difficult to achieve.

The nuts and bolts of the guidebook deal with planning processes, data requirements, specific operational principles, a sequence of implementation activities, and financial considerations. It covers, in some detail, the specific development of an articulated program, including the process of meshing competencies and courses, strategies for communicating and marketing, and suggestions for evaluation. A particularly useful feature is an end section which recommends specific duties for all involved personnel, from instructors and counselors to Deans and Superintendent designees. Finally, chosen from a careful review of a national articulation survey compiled by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, contacts are listed for three flagship articulation programs. Each can offer significant assistance to schools and colleges interested in levels of sophistication that go beyond the granting of credit or advanced standing. This is not to imply that credit for prior work or advanced standing are without considerable merit. But, it is meant to urge institutions to investigate the formal integration of competencies, courses, and entire programs in order to reach the essence of total articulation.

Coordinating Education and Employment Training: A Study of JTPA - Vocational Education System Coordination in Massachusetts

The Pivotal thread, in a manner of speaking, the cross-stitch of the entire project, was a study of "Coordinating Education and Employment Training." This ambitious effort allowed the project to expand from an emphasis on intra-sector coordination (articulation) to an emphasis that included coordination between sectors. Analysis was directed to significant issues concerning the

relationship between education and employment training. The State Council's longstanding Leadership Committee was expanded from a group of Superintendents and Community College Presidents to include State Legislators and Administrators interested in both education and employment training. The enlarged leadership committee consulted on the development of this study and was a vital sounding board for its final drafts.

This effort to provide insight into the status of coordination between training programs (most significantly JTPA) and school/college occupational programs, was based on case studies developed through roundtable discussions and individual interviews in four JTPA service delivery areas. The meetings and interviews involved key local level professionals from both sectors. An earlier 1987 study had surveyed the perceptions of both State and local administrators on the subject of coordination and provided data and a basis of comparison for the current report. The new study reviews the findings of the 1987 survey and explains how the case study approach differs from the survey methodology; it permits the collection of richly textured data to be contrasted with the more general responses of the broadly applied 1987 questionnaire.

Sites were selected with the intent of their being representative of the diversity of SDA regions in Massachusetts and to make it possible to gather an abundance of varied information as to what really happens at the local level. Attitudes, relationships, specific coordination efforts, barriers, benefits, and values attached to coordination are described with considerable clarity. Using the data from the cases, the study then moves from the descriptive to the analytical through chapters devoted to the examination of how institutions make coordination related decisions, their recommendations on how to improve coordination, coordination findings across sites, and a concluding discussion about the nature of coordination and questions for future consideration. "Outstanding issues" vary from region to region; factors that may create problems for one institution or service area may not be barriers to others.

Certain SDAs express frustration in their attempts to involve educators, while educators often express a feeling of exclusion. Regions also vary in the history of their organizational and political relationships between training and education establishments. In some, there is advocacy for a presumptive delivery system, whereby schools and colleges have an inside track to the provision of services as long as they meet program requirements and outcome standards. Others tend to have a history of reliance on Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and still others have used skill centers, largely independent of the schools, for virtually all training.

Whether the SDA should be a service provider at all is a growing issue. At the same time, doubt lingers over the ability of schools to work under a system of performance contracting and whether or not educators can meet the relatively short term completion and placement standards required by most training programs. A further complication arises in regions where there are particularly strong feelings about the missions of the two

sectors. One mission is geared to making people job ready in the shortest possible time; the other contends that job preparation is a long term process and requires a more formal educational approach.

Some areas coordinate youth programs more easily than training aimed at adults. However, the growing recognition of the problem of adult illiteracy and the need for improved educational skills at all ages tends to raise the coordination ante across the board. It can either exacerbate turfism as each agency seeks to run educational programs for its respective clients, or it can bring the agencies closer together if they choose to collaborate.

These issues indicate the complexity of the data developed by the case studies. However, the case studies also make it possible to gain insights as to how coordination related decisions are made. By looking at two regional schools within the same SDA, a picture is developed "on whether incentives to coordination outweigh barriers." The study also looks at all the SDAs described in the cases to determine "how they solicit among vendors generally and on the use of skill centers specifically."

A comparison of two regional schools reveals almost total difference in the value they place on coordination. One has a history of "self-contained" behavior, while the other has a considerable history of collaborative behavior. They have widely different views as to the value of committing to the time demands of coordination activities. Their school governance bodies have different attitudes relative to the desirability of a broad or narrowly defined mission. Operational obstacles to working with external funding sources such as JTPA is viewed as daunting but generally worth the effort by one school, while the same obstacles cause the other to "simply walk away."

Nonetheless, from this comparison, numerous benefits emerge which are cited as helpful to a school's mission and image. Youth served in summer employment training programs, usually JTPA, receive "important exposure to the school." Serving adults in training programs helps fulfill the school's responsibility to the community. Being sensitive to the service needs of the community improves the school's position at budget time. Faculty enjoy having program diversity, extra compensation, and the infusion of new funds for supplies and equipment. Industry is pleased with the school's involvement in the production of more skilled workers.

The second analysis of how institutions make coordination decisions involved looking at "Why SDAs Use Skill Centers and How They Select Among Vendors." As the case studies clearly indicate, the greatest obstacle to coordination between employment training and education is the use of a skill center by the SDA. About half of the State's SDAs have skill centers or do substantial contracting with externally run centers. The views of SDA directors as to the desirability of programming through a skill center are remarkably divergent. They encompass differing approaches to the organization of service delivery, and they reflect different external relationships with schools, colleges and Community Based Organizations; relationships often colored by issues of turf and political history.

Rationales for having a skill center run the gamut from the conviction that direct control of services makes it easier to keep costs down and placements high, to beliefs that schools and colleges can not meet the quality of training provided by a skill center. Implicit in these views is the judgment that education's mission is not geared to performance contracting, short term programs, and rapid job placement. Usually, educators from schools and community colleges in the areas having skill centers do not agree with these assumptions and feel that they are unable to prove their competence to deliver services because of a lack of access to the training system.

Reasons for not wanting direct program control through the use of a skill center include the desirability of having available a variety of regional resources allowing for more flexibility in responding to the local labor market, freeing up funds for more services by eliminating duplication in equipment and staff, and a belief that a competitive RFP procedure "keeps the process fresh and responsive." The use of schools may be seen as an asset not only for their ability to deliver a service but for the sense of self-esteem that can occur when continuing education becomes part of a client's life.

The analysis of perspectives on how coordination decisions are made is followed by an equally informative discussion of recommendations for improving coordination. These recommendations from the field are directed to local, regional and State practices. Locally, the issue of time (also meaning extra funds) is paramount. A response to the problem is the recommendation for establishing a coordinator position at each school or college. There is no consensus on how to fund the position, but there is consensus that the funding source be external and not the operating budget.

Regionally, the need for a position of coordinator is also highly regarded. Again there is agreement that the position be funded externally, but there is lack of agreement as to whether a regional coordinator should operate under the aegis of the Department of Education regional centers or the Regional Employment Boards.

While the need for staff activities dominates field recommendations for local and regional coordination improvement, an array of recommendations is directed to the State. High on the list is a recommendation to create geographic uniformity in areas served by SDAs, schools, or colleges, thereby eliminating complex issues of governance and program delivery. The sale of slots and standardized paperwork are proposed as another solution if it is impossible to change boundary lines.

However, the most agreed upon set of recommendations has to do with State level leadership and the provision of incentives. While top level state leaders are seen as supporting coordination rhetorically, there is suspicion about the commitment to coordination by State bureaucrats and officials in general. The need for leveraging coordination by making additional funds available on the basis of requiring inter-institutional

coordination is frequently cited, as is lessening the "onerous" nature of many JTPA and Perkins regulations.

Agency turf struggles, a history of lack of follow through on other initiatives, and uncertainty on all sides as to the future role of Regional Employment Boards gives rise to a virtually unanimous call for the State to get its own "coordination act" together. It is further stressed that if the State means business, it must recognize that if coordination is to produce long-term savings, short-term investments in new staff and effort are required. Implicit in the entire discussion of recommended State actions is the strongly held conviction that while the field may not be fully committed to the efficiency of coordination, it can be moved in that direction and has the institutional know-how for getting the job done if the State will serve as a serious model, strong leader, and reliable provider of incentives.

The concluding discussions in the study move to findings across sites, conclusions about the nature of coordination, and questions for future consideration. Much of the analysis moves away from individuals' observations to the consideration of structural issues revealed from the dialogues and interviews.

The findings frequently are placed in the context of comparisons with the 1987 survey. Since the '87 study indicated the great importance to respondents of information sharing activities, it is noteworthy that the current study indicates that reality is often less than that which was deemed so important. However, it is not unusual when delving beyond survey responses to find that practice lags behind that which is viewed as desirable. (For example, the annual Gallop poll on education invariably finds that respondents are willing to pay more taxes to improve education.)

The current study also finds a number of barriers to coordination that were either not indicated or were not considered significant in the earlier work. While turf and the RFP process were considerable issues in both studies, the skill center issue is much more prominent in the current study. The issue of regional institutions with service areas that do not overlap also surfaces as more significant this time around, as does the complicated matter of performance contracting.

The current analysis shows a considerable "perceptual mismatch" between SDAs and educational institutions in terms of the quality of service delivery. The '87 study showed a strong call for State leadership. The current study picks up the same message but does not sense the positive attitude that seemed to be stirred in 1987. While there may have been the appearance of more leadership in 1987, an argument can be made that it also was largely rhetorical. The reality of coordination as a high state priority was not likely any greater in 1987 than it is in 1989.

A further means of contrasting the '87 and '89 findings is an elaborate table which summarizes coordination barriers, incentives, and interest levels by institution and institutional type. Rather than determining perceptions by survey, the table attempts to

indicate actual attitudes culled from dialogues and interviews. It is felt that this more intensive approach surfaces issues that permit a better understanding of why coordination is or is not practiced.

The aggregated data, as displayed in the table, illustrates one particular finding that overshadows all others; the vast majority of educational institutions are substantially dissatisfied over current relationships with employment training administrations. Conversely, all the SDAs in the case studies are "essentially satisfied" with the status quo.

What likely has occurred is that the facilitated dialogue and open-ended interviews of the current study uncovered barriers and inducements unique to Massachusetts localities that have existed for years. In so doing, this study moves the project's findings past what people say to what people do. The bottom line is that coordination is difficult to achieve and that progress will require persistence, leadership, and fundamental change. Activities, such as information sharing and responding to occasional bursts of external incentives are necessary, but by themselves insufficient.

In an attempt to respond to these "verities", it is hypothesized that effective coordination "hinges upon the agreement of all parties that coordination around program delivery is desirable." Based on the assumption that currently this agreement is limited and that an interpretation of what an agreement should constitute is subject to differing interpretations, three factors are put forth as needing further investigation if coordination is to improve. One factor has to do with the demographic and financial pressures on educational institutions which "increase their interest in JTPA and other external funding sources." Another factor is the unique relationship between SDAs and educational institutions which is "most akin to that between a buyer and a seller." The third factor concerns dissatisfaction with the services provided by schools and colleges, the likelihood that they are unaware of the dissatisfaction, and the role that different system missions play in the distortion of this communication. The discussion of these factors leads to the proposing of "questions to be considered about promoting greater coordination of service delivery."

One question asks for clarity in the goals of improved coordination. It is contended that without clear prioritization of goals, policy development is made more difficult. A set of possible priorities is presented. A second question asks how any policy formulation can accommodate the "mismatch" of missions between education and employment training. A list of policy options is offered that possibly would solve the enigma of system idiosyncrasies. The third question moves the discussion to strategies for intervention. "What can the State do to affect the interaction between the educational and the employment training systems?" To provoke debate, three approaches are suggested. Leave the system as a free market and funnel more money through it with the purpose of encouraging educational institutions to eventually become more entrepreneurial. Use the RFP process, regionally and statewide, as an incentive to leverage

coordination. Implement a presumptive delivery plan guaranteeing education an increased role, commensurate with each institution's strengths, in the provision of employment training services. A final question deals with the issue of whether state mandating of coordination is possible or even desirable. Is coordination only possible on a bottom up basis, with the State limited to the role of facilitator and provider of incentives?

The entire report, from the description of the case studies to the posing of conceptual issues regarding the potential for coordination becoming an accepted way of doing business, adds up to a major challenge. While current priorities and attitudes underscore the difficulty of working cooperatively across programs, sectors, and systems, the need for coordination to improve the effectiveness of service delivery is inescapable. Beneath all the barriers and disincentives uncovered by the study is the feeling of systems groping to find a way to deal with the major shifts in the economic and political environment of the State and the nation that make the reorganization of service delivery inevitable. The recent report of the National Center on Education and the Economy, titled "To Secure Our Future - The Federal Role In Education," stated that "the aim of Federal policy (substitute State policy) should be to create the conditions under which local people have strong incentives to meet the needs of students and maximum freedom to figure out how to produce those results." A careful reading of new federal initiatives and critiques of State practices can only lead to the prediction that new ways of figuring out how to produce results are on the way and will mean that established institutions will be required to coordinate their work in ways never before anticipated.

Making Connections -- Between Education and Employment Training

As a prelude to the future, the project wove its finishing threads by producing a handbook which describes four different types of coordination practices already in place in Massachusetts. It is intended to highlight creativity that goes beyond the traditional RFP process as a means of implementing coordination. The handbook recognizes the merit of the RFP process, acknowledges the many programs initiated through conventional methods, but purposefully focuses on significant projects that could only be implemented through different approaches and the willingness of parties to work together creatively. Each project is given a brief description and contacts are listed for those wanting more information.

Two of the programs were designed by regional vocational schools for people who did not fit into the targeted categories served by employment training. One school has open enrollment adult programs after regular school hours. If entrants meet a targeted criteria the appropriate agency is contacted and slots are subcontracted to meet clients' needs. Adults not in a targeted population can usually be accommodated through funding provided by the Federal Vocational Education Act. The coordination of existing

local resources, federally funded vocational education programs, and slots for targeted JTPA and ET populations opens programs to virtually all comers and maximizes the return of local and State investments in the facility.

The second school offers training to adults in the regular day program. Although start-up funding came from the Federal Vocational Education Act, trainees are drawn from a variety of public agencies and businesses. If eligible, referred and targeted clients are supported by other funding streams; if ineligible they pay a sliding fee based on income. Again the coordinated use of existing resources with support funds from diverse sources creates a needed service through a non-traditional, but cost-effective strategy.

The third project is a coordinated effort by five vocational schools and two community colleges to sell training slots in programs for which SDAs have a particular demand. Recognizing that it is often not economical to create an entirely new instructional program for a limited number of eligible trainees, the consortium offers listings of programs and openings to the SDA and "assumes responsibility for meeting whatever instructional needs the Regional Employment Board expresses."

The final program addresses a specific occupational demand for the machinist trades. A plan was developed for a career ladder approach to metalwork training by "combining the best of what each individual institution has to offer in one coordinated delivery system." The project "pooled the instructional resources of several vocational schools, a community college, a private school, and an employment training skill center." A particularly unique aspect of the project is that in addition to relying on inter-agency cooperation (horizontal coordination), it also relied on curriculum articulation between providers (vertical coordination). Common curricula have been established, allowing students to work towards an Associate's Degree or journeyman's papers of the apprenticeship program. Funds have been pooled from a variety of sources, providing all parties incentive to make the project succeed.

Conclusion

While each of these reports is unique, they are all interconnected - each building on the other. The inventory, the reports on articulation, the analysis and handbook regarding the interplay of education and employment training, should be studied and used as parts of a whole. The Council's own response is leading it toward propounding a "vision" for the future. A "vision" that would look to how one might reorganize education and training if given the opportunity to create from the beginning a new delivery system with the maximum potential for meeting the needs of today's student and clients. It would do so not out of naive idealism, but as a practical response to the reality of changing demographics, complicated social conditions, and global economic challenge.

It is an expectation of the Council that the papers summarized herein, as well as the Conference for which they serve as a basis, will provide the necessary impetus for beginning serious work toward such a "vision."

The several years of effort put forth by the Council and its collaborators from the worlds of education and training provide a roughly hewn path to the future. A commitment to keep working along this path can provide the smoother road needed for the transition of systems to the world of tomorrow. This will be difficult work. It will be difficult even to agree to participate. But it is work that must be done if education and employment training are to succeed in their missions and if they are to continue to fully earn the public trust.